



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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DEPARTMENT RECEIVES \$9.6 MILLION BONUS PAYMENT FOR WELFARE TO WORK SUCCESSSES *FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAM MOVING PEOPLE TO WORK AND IMPROVING LIVES*

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— The Tennessee Department of Human Services has been awarded \$9.576 million in high performance bonuses from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for its continued successes in the Families First program. Families First is the state's welfare to work program, which took effect in 1996.

Tennessee ranked third nationally both for the percentage of unemployed Families First participants who went to work and for those who kept their jobs. Tennessee's award was the maximum amount it could earn under the bonus program. Only ten other states received their maximum award.

The bonus payments include \$6.9 million for job entry in federal fiscal year 2003 and \$2.6 million for job entry improvement over the previous year.

"We are very proud of our program and our participants, who are trying so hard to become self-sufficient," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "We are especially proud of our employees and contract partners who work hard to help our participants succeed."

This is the third year in a row Tennessee has been recognized by HHS for Families First achievements. The state has won high performance bonuses five out of the last six years. The total amount of these awards now totals \$36.8 million.

There are currently 73,800 families on the program, and the average monthly cash benefit is \$170. The number of families served on the program since its inception exceeds 250,000.

For more information on the Families First Program, visit the DHS website at:
<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/famfir.htm>

For more information on the HHS awards, visit the HHS website at:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2004/HPB.htm>

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